Concordia UNIVERSITY

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From the Dean's Desk

Shades of Grades

Although it may be quite difficult, and under many conditions practically impossible to delineate precise and universally accepted criteria to distinguish an A+ from an A or a B- from a C, there are still important distinctions to be made. Designating one student's work as A+ and another's as A is one of the more challenging individual judgments encountered by professors. It is exacting at the best of times. Simply because we encounter trying circumstances when we attempt to explain grade differences for what may appear to be analogous work, we should not simply think that this distinction is either arbitrary or subjective.

Beginning in June 1991, Concordia University will have a graduate grading scheme for course work which is structured as follows: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C, F. It will replace a system which had no pluses or minuses.

There are several appealing reasons for introducing this new scheme. Such a grading system provides individual professors with enriched opportunities for articulating fine points and it recognizes that all "better" students cannot reasonably be placed into only two categories, A and B. With graduate programs housed in more than one university, which is an increasingly common phenomenon in times of budgetary restraint, an enhanced grading system is more likely to accommodate the diversity required. In Quebec there is a notable similarity in graduate grading systems. This approximation of a standard, which need not be thought of as accepting that there should be only one set of grades for expressing academic judgments, allows students to move from one university to another with relative ease unencumbered by non-comparable records of achievement. There have also been suggestions that a more consistent pattern for graduate grades in Canada as a whole may lead to more transparent decisions in the NSERC and SSHRC competitions, for example. Although they are not the only criterion, grades do constitute one of the cleanest means for establishing the value of students' transcripts. In highly competitive settings — for entry to graduate schools as well as for fellowships — in which students are compared to one another, having an adequately refined set of grades is increasingly relevant.

Certain graduate undertakings are not evaluated using alphabetical labels. Comprehensive examinations are marked with Pass and Fail. Theses, for example, normally have as their final grade Accepted or Rejected. While it may be true that examining committees want minor or even major revisions to the thesis as submitted, the only designation which appears on the students' records is Accepted or Rejected. In certain doctoral programs, a thesis constitutes as much as eighty per cent of the total number of credits of the degree program, while it often equals as much as fifty percent in a master's program. Given the innovative and creative aspects of doctoral work, one begins to question whether a simple Yes/No statement is astute enough to render justice to the diverse and eclectic work of students on the one hand, and to the sensitivity of discerning supervisors and examining committees on the other.

The language and classifications which universities currently use for thesis "grades" will likely change in the not too distant future. Words such as 'adequate,' 'good,' 'very good,' 'excellent,' 'fair,' 'poor,' 'outstanding,' 'acceptable,' or 'a landmark,' 'highly innovative,' 'creative,' 'insightful' and 'inspiring' may actually be deemed more appropriate.

The interactive relations of graduate students, professors, and supervisors as well as the multi-faceted problems and judgments which take place in examinations and thesis defences are profoundly nuanced. Grading schemes are designed to provide increasingly adequate ways of expressing these nuances. These schemes should therefore be reexamined periodically, as attempts are made to divine patterns which capture the realities with which students and professors will always be confronted in a dynamic and changing environment.

M. E. Szabo
Dean

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Vice-Rector Rose Sheinin's Views on Graduate Education

by Barbara Verity

Although Dr. Rose Sheinin believes passionately in the value of dreaming, her head clearly does not stay in the clouds.

"You first dream and then you set about developing structures to implement your ideas. The existing structure must not be allowed to inhibit new ideas," she says. Her first year as Vice-Rector, Academic, has given her many ideas about Concordia's potential.

In order to implement them, she draws on a background of experience in academic administration at the University of Toronto as Graduate Co-ordinator in the Department of Medical Biophysics, Chair of the Department of Microbiology and Parasitology (1975-1981) and Vice-Dean of the School of Graduate Studies where she was Vice-Dean from 1984 to 1989 as well as carrying out advanced research in microbiology, which she taught for 25 years at the University of Toronto. She has an international reputation in cancer and DNA research, serving as a Visiting Research Associate at the University of Cambridge and Britain's National Institute Medical Research, and also as a France-Canada Exchange Fellow at the Institut de Recherches Scientifiques sur le Cancer at Villejuif near Paris.

From her extensive academic background, Sheinin has formed strong views about university education, which she expresses eloquently. "Teaching empowers another person to develop all their talents to the optimum," she says.

Rose Sheinin, international scholar in cancer and DNA research.

University Research

She also points out that since World War II, there has been a steady increase in emphasis in university research. That desire to have research must always be consonant with the entire spectrum of university activities, the most important of which is teaching. Yet too often graduate and undergraduate studies are kept separate, whereas they must flow one to the other, she states.

The linkage of research to teaching, which go together in a spectral arc, is not stressed enough at Concordia, she adds. "The attempts to generate graduate studies tend to be unlinked to the rest of the activity. It's too much an add-on to undergraduate studies," she says. Instead, within a department the total curriculum should be looked at in order to assess what's being delivered to the student. "You can't do good graduate studies without good undergraduate studies and vice versa. They complement each other."

Sheinin's views are as clear about other aspects of university life. She is a strong supporter of part-time studies, increased opportunities for women, and university-industry ties.

"It's been a thrillling experience for me to hear people say that they couldn't have gone to university if it wasn't for Concordia. "They say, 'I am a Concordia graduate, or a Sir George or Loyola graduate. If I hadn't been able to do my studies part-time, I wouldn't have been able to do what I am doing now', Judge Alan Gold, Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Quebec and the Chancellor of Concordia, is one of the people who told me that. There are hundreds of others in all disciplines."

She values this commitment by Concordia to part-time studies and thinks that more support structures should be created to help part-time undergraduate and graduate students. She would like to see more access to funding and an overall university policy on part-time studies.

As an example, she points to how the Executive MBA program and cooperative education programs have carefully addressed and met the needs of their students, many part-time.

Sheinin says that part-time students have a strong commitment to their studies. They are there because they want to be, and they're prepared to work hard. She points to Dorothy Hodgkinson, who earned her science degree part-time while raising her five children and who went on to win the Nobel Prize for her use of X-ray crystallography to elucidate the structure of Vitamin B-12.

Needs of Women

Sheinin is particularly sensitive to the needs of women students. Throughout her own academic career, she has been fortunate to have an enormous support system from her family, colleagues and friends, a system which allowed her to carry out her studies and research with few impediments.

Strong university support, however, must be available for those not having ready access to such an extended family, she adds. Frequently the majority of women, who form 52% of the population, do not have this support. "We're here for

100% of the population, and we must deliver equality of education to everyone," she says.

"What is needed are more women faculty who can serve as appropriate role models and mentors to women students and make them feel comfortable. We need more listening by the University to the needs of women and we need the provision of the necessary support system. We need greater flexibility to take into account family and child-raising needs and more child care facilities on or near campus. We have to stop insisting that only male paradigms be followed," she points out.

She views the establishment by the Division of Graduate Studies of the Gender Equity Committee as an excellent move. "I wish them Godspeed and ask everyone to help."

University-industry Links

On the subject of university-industry links, the Vice-Rector, Academic, feels that the university must guide industry on campus to ensure that the university mission is being fulfilled in university-industry cooperative ventures. She explains that it is appropriate for university departments to be concerned with the transformation of a new scientific observation into a technology. In contrast, the transfer of that technology to the industrial workplace must be the concern of industry. The requisite student research would best be done at a technological institute or an industrial park.

The goals of university and industry differ. "Only the university provides for the creation of the next generation of scientists and scholars. Industry makes money," she says. Sheinin therefore thinks that only those industrial programs that support, and are in accord with the university mission, should form the core of the industrial/university research effort.

Bilingualism and multiculturalism at Concordia also rouse strong sentiments in Sheinin. She places great value on these aspects of Concordia life that she has found so prevalent among the students and faculty. More should be made of it, she says.

"Concordia has to re-examine its reality within a French-speaking province and begin to take steps to recognize this," she says. As an example, she recommends that mechanisms be put in place to encourage and welcome French-speaking students into graduate studies. Faculty should be encouraged to teach in English and French, and the university's service sector should operate in both languages.

Sheinin finds it bizarre that so little research is being done at Concordia on the subject of the interaction between the French- and English-speaking communities. "We are an institution which reflects society. This is an important time in the history of Quebec, and Concordia should get involved in these issues," she says.

Multiculturalism

She is also amazed at the same tendency in regard to Concordia's multiculturalism. "It's an opportunity that we're missing. The cultural and ethnic diversity of the faculty and student body, which is a resource that no other university has in such abundance, is not being used in our academic activities as creatively as it might be," says Sheinin.

She is pleased with the recent establishment of the Chair in Hindu Studies, but wonders about the possible future curriculum development in research topics and course content regarding this culture and the many others at the University. She sees potential for interdisciplinary graduate programs in urban studies and in issues of race and ethnicity in a multicultural society.

"I've never seen such ethnic diversity among faculty in any other Canadian University as there is at Concordia. I'm not surprised that other universities don't have academic and research programs directed to this issue. We have major strength in ethnic diversity and we aren't translating this into any of our academic programs. It's a wonderful potential. I wish we would turn our attention to this. Then Concordia would be in a position to develop a truly unique academic program from strength."

Vice-Rector Sheinin's vision is broad, and her enthusiasm great. "Concordia is a wonderful place. It has been growing slowly for a long time and now it's rapidly moving forward. It's very exciting to be a part of it," she says.

Sheinin feels Concordia's research opportunities within its French-speaking and multicultural milieu need to be addressed

Notice

March 1	*Last day for doctoral thesis submission to the Thesis Office for Spring Convocation.*
March 15	*Last day for master's thesis submission to the Thesis Office for Spring Convocation.*
April 12	*Last day for FINAL submission of theses for Spring Convocation .*

Virginia Nixon Ph.D.
SIP Student in Art History

by Gary Caplan

Virginia Nixon's undergraduate study ended with a B.A. in English from Carleton University in 1962. After graduation, she travelled and worked as a journalist for the Ottawa Journal. She moved to Montreal in 1967 where she worked as an art critic for the Montreal Gazette for eleven years. During her time at the Gazette she also wrote articles for magazines *Vie des Arts*, *Art and Canadian Forum* and did some broadcasting for the CBC.

In 1980, she decided to further explore the historical and theoretical aspects of art production. She registered for a graduate course in Art History given by Hardy George entitled, "Art and Travel." It was during this first course that she decided to do a master's in Art History.

Her master's thesis, entitled, "Antoine-Sébastien Falardeau (1822-1889) and The Old Master Copy in the Nineteenth Century," examines the career of the Quebec-born, Old Master copyist, Antoine Sébastien Falardeau, and the conceptual and physical milieu in which he worked.

The thesis begins by correcting and amplifying the biography of the artist . It then proposes a framework within which to set the changes that occurred in the concept(s) and functions of the copy as a traditional way gave way to the modern. The earlier copy was an accepted part of a system of artistic production in which the work of art was seen as essentially reproducible. With the advent of the Romantic conviction that art work is the personal, spontaneous production of a specific individual, the copy lost its status and shifted from the mainstream to the periphery of art production. The nineteenth century souvenir copy (and the use of copies in the new museums founded to provide a morally oriented public education) is discussed, as is the situation of the copy in Quebec, where earlier concepts and functions survived. Nixon then describes the structures and regulations that governed the production of copies in Florence.

Nixon chose Concordia as the site of her Ph.D. work because she found the structure of the courses required for her doctoral studies emphasized an interdisciplinary approach — "a broadness, an awareness, a flexibility of social factors in the production of art that appealed to me. I also liked the scope for research that was offered because the study of Canadian Art History is relatively new, allowing a lot of room for original contributions in this field. Finally, the faculty in the Department of Art History is extremely supportive of their students," Nixon explains.

"My Ph.D. dissertation will be a study of the image known as the *Anna Seldritt*, a depiction of Saint Anne, Mary (often as a child) and the Infant Jesus. It appears first in the very late 1200's but is especially common during 1470-1530, most prominently in Germany, Holland and Flanders. My focus, in particular, is Germany and I am interested in uncovering the relationship between the image and the theological and social factors that have affected it — for example, the discourse concerning the Immaculate Conception that was being carried on in northern humanist circles, the development of middle class spirituality, attitudes towards women and marriage and perceptions of the salvation process. I would also like to know more precisely how religious art works functioned in the daily lives of the people who commissioned the work, and to investigate the specific ways in which Northern gothic religious art puts across its message. I am interested in investigating geographical correlations with Protestantism and the quality of simultaneity present in Northern European Art," Nixon states in her doctoral proposal.

Nixon's work involves travelling to Europe during the summers. Next summer will be her third trip abroad to do research in libraries and archives of Germany, Holland and Belgium. "Primarily I spend my time looking at such things as 15th and 16th century 'Lives of St. Anne' and documents concerning medieval confraternities and so on. In many cases I order microfilms of these books and documents to research at home during the winter," Nixon explains.

The Department of Art History does not have a Ph.D. program so Nixon is completing her degree as a student in the Special Individual Program. Her committee members are Ellen James, as her supervisor in Art History, Lionel Rothkrug in History and Pierre Boglioni in the Département des études classiques et medievals at the Université de Montréal.

Nixon is presently teaching Art History at Concordia's Liberal Arts College. "I enjoy the challenge of teaching very much," she explains, "and hope to continue in the future."

Upcoming Doctoral Examinations

McAFFER, Valerie
Psychology
Date: January 28, 1991 at 10:00 a.m.
Location: H-769
Title: *A Longitudinal Study of Intergenerational Transfer of Psychosocial Risk: Aggressive and Withdrawn Girls as Mothers*

KROUGLICOF, Nicholas
Mechanical Engineering
Date: February 5, 1991 at 2:00 p.m.
Location: H-769
Title: *Noncontact Position and Orientation Measurement Techniques for Real-Time Systems*

KRISHNAMOORTHY, Suban
Computer Science
Date: February 15, 1991 at 10:00 a.m.
Location: H-762
Title: *Universal Multilingual Information Interchange System with Character Reader and Terminal*

The examinations for the above students will take place in the Hall building, 1455 de Maisonneuve West., Montreal.

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